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ABSTRACT

Based on constructivist theory (emphasizing meaning generation rather than communication), the study described in this report clarifies and elaborates on the definition of the term "expressive writing." First, the paper offers a rationale for the study and a discussion of the research methodology, which combined analysis of texts and theories as well as introspection. The second section presents a constructivist context for expressive composing, which proposes that written composition is a meaning-construction process, that meaning includes feeling, and that the constructivist model is a process rather than a developmental or text-classification model. The next section then describes the model and explains that, as a dialectic process, it includes notions of sense and imagination, anticipation (of what the text will look like) and expression, conscious and unconscious activity, superordinate and subordinate schemata--which suggests that texts are guided by an image of what the final form should be but are changed by internal and external forces as they emerge--and an overall dialectic of writing as an expressive and rhetorical act. Sections on process and text, the writer-reader dimension, and expressiveness and form are given, followed by subsections on such topics at associative patterns, patterns of repetition, patterns of narration, and figurative language most of which include examples from published and unpublished prose and poetry. A summary and a section suggesting directions for research conclude the paper. (Fifty-two references are included.) (JC)

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An Examination of Expressive Functions in a Constructivist Model of Written Composing

by

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The notion of expressive writing, although it is neither new nor unfamiliar, represents a complex conceptual puzzle. It has been variously defined (e.g. Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Kinneavy, 1971; Wheelwright, 1954) and variously applied (e.g. Kirby & Kantor, 1983; Young, 1981). Echoes of its meanings are found in such diverse concepts as "writer-based prose" (Flower, 1979) and "reflexive writing"(Emig, 1971). When Britton and his colleagues (1975) collected the writings of London school children, they were able to categorize less than six percent of it as expressive; that is, reflecting the writer's personal concerns and preoccupations. Yet this work asserts that expressive writing is the matrix from which all other writing develops, and something like an expressive function is implicit in many other theories and models (e.g. Emig, 1971; Moffett, 1968, 1981; Murray, 1982).

This study was undertaken to address conceptual problems related to expressive writing:

1. Definitions of the term <u>expressive writing</u> in discourse, as well as literary, theory differ widely.
2. Some discourse theorists and composing scholars use the term <u>expressive</u>; others do not.
3. Despite wide use by teachers, researchers, and textbook writers, the term lacks a consistent definition.
4. Differences in both definition and application of the term reflect deeper conflicts about the nature of written composing.

In spite of these problems, the term expressive writing is a valuable one, and a consistent, accurate characterization of expressive writing is important for research in written composing:

1. It is a familiar term and therefore useful in identifying certain kinds of writing activity and certain kinds of texts.
2. Its various definitions and applications suggest at least a tentative connection between expressive composing, learning, and thinking.
3. A consistent concept of expressive writing can provide a basis for comparing and evaluating discourse theories.
4. It can be used to identify and elaborate parallels among composing theory and other fields of inquiry, especially psychology, philosophy, and literary criticism.
5. It can provide a stronger, more coherent theoretical foundation for teaching writing.

Conceptual conflicts about expressive writing should not surprise us when we note that even among recognized scholars the term lacks a consistent definition. Kinneavy (1971), in his discourse theory, treats expressive writing as a purposeful and communicative text category. He asserts that "the interaction of the self with others and the world is the essence of the act of expression" (p. 401). In the work of Britton (1982), on the other hand, expressive writing is conceived as focusing on individual writers and their preoccupations. He describes expressive writing as a way of "exploring . . . both the inner and outer aspects of experience" (p. 53). Interaction appears to be secondary to self-discovery. These differences have their source in the theoretical perspectives of their authors: Kinneavy's view is phenomenological, and Britton's model is based on

developmental psychology. Additionally, information processing theories (e.g. Flower & Hayes, 1981) exclude or subordinate expressive writing as they emphasize text production for transactional purposes.

A clearer understanding of expressive writing can add to the body of theory that informs research and practice, and can provide a basis on which to compare and evaluate theories about composing. The need to generate rather than test hypotheses (Cooper & O'Dell, 1978) has guided much recent research. Berthoff (1981) argues, however, that process research requires conceptual support, "an accurate, substantial conception of the kind of process composing is" (p. 28), in order to add measurably to teachers' ability to teach writing. Expressive writing, because of its unique position "close" to the writer (Britton et al., 1975, p. 82), may provide a useful focus on a kind of writing and a dimension of the composing process about which there is little agreement. The relationship of composing process research to discourse theory may be clarified by articulating the role that expressive writing plays in both.

Furthermore, any theory should be strengthened and supported by the variety and quality of its sources. Research in many fields suggests that cognition itself may be, to a significant extent, an expressive act. Scientists (e.g. Boyd, 1979) as well as psychologists (e.g. Neisser, 1976, 1982) account for the centrality of experience in constructing meaning. Zukav (1979) offers this assertion:

> Access to the physical world is through experience. The common denominator of all experience is the "I" that does the experiencing. In short, what we experience is not external reality, but our <u>interaction</u> with it (pp. 92-93, author's italics).

A definition of expressive writing can, therefore, help to strengthen the theoretical connections between composing and research in other fields

where a theory of knowing underlies the discovery of new ideas.

Although researchers seek published models for many kinds of writing--poetry, fiction, persuasive essays, or expository texts, their view of expressive writing has been limited mostly to the work of school children. One reason for this may be that expressive writing as a public textual phenomenon is relatively new. It follows a century of psychological and artistic trends toward introspection, subjectivity, and irrationality. Frye (1963) says that attempts to capture the stream of consciousness began only with Dickens. Writers like Joyce and Woolf gave literary form to the activity of the mind itself, subordinating the objective events on which the mind performs its interpretative acts. When researchers see expressive writing as childish or underdeveloped, they tend to ignore the personal nature of much published writing: the writing, for instance, of naturalists and philosophers. A more flexible and articulate conception of expressive functions in written composing may include a range of processes and texts.

Finally, such a definition may contribute to a stronger theoretical foundation for teaching writing. Discussing a study of student journal-writing, Martin (1983) argues for the use of expressive writing as a legitimate learning tool, not only in English classes but throughout the curriculum. Others (e.g. Kantor & Rubin, 1981; Kirby & Liner, 1981; Macrorie, 1970; Murray, 1982) agree that learning to write originates in the personal feelings and experiences of the writer. Yet writing in schools, especially secondary schools and colleges, continues to be in the main a narrow activity, more closely related to testing than to learning.

The present study presents and elaborates a definition of the term <u>expressive writing</u> as a range of composing functions or activities, in order

to place expressive composing functions in a coherent theoretical context and to resolve questions about (1) the nature of expressiveness in written texts, (2) the role of expressive writing in existing discourse theories, and (3) the value of the term for researchers and teachers of written composing. The inquiry was conducted inductively, using theoretical literature as its primary data. The quantity of sources contributing to such a definition and the number and significance of discrepancies in use of either the term or a closely related term have led to the inquiry's methodology. Recent studies (e.g. Shanklin, 1981; Taxel, 1980) illustrate that, when there is inadequate or conflicting theory or where the research objective is to construct a conceptual link between two or more existing theories, a study based on the comparative analysis of concepts is appropriate. In this study, expressive texts have been used, not as data, but to provide illustrations of various composing functions and textual features as they are introduced. The main source of the inquiry lies in the body of contemporary discourse theory. That theory, along with related literature in psychology, linguistics, and philosophy, comprises most of the study's data.

Method

The present study, first, proposes a constructivist model of written composing as context for what Black (1954) refers to as a persuasive range definition of the term <u>expressive writing</u> and, second, compares the features and functions of expressive writing with relevant features and functions in selected discourse theories. The definition constitutes what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call formal theory to this extent: It describes, primarily, conceptual features rather then specific applications: much,but not all, data used to generate categories have been the instances and descriptions

of the term in professional literature. These instances and descriptions have been interpreted and compared within a constructivist framework drawn from sources in psychology and philosophy. Throughout the research process, an essential dimension has been the researcher's reflection on the data and on the questions generated by divergent theoretical perspectives. A detailed process journal, kept alongside reading notes, provided a record of questions, introspection, and tentative hypotheses. These written reflections then became part of the data of the study.

In the manner suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the inquiry moved back and forth among the following steps, which are only generally sequential, not chronological:

1. collection of detailed information about current conceptions of expressive writing;
2. formulation, through comparison of information and through informed introspection, of questions about the nature of expressive writing;
3. use of the questions to create initial, tentative categories;
4. formulation of a definition that accounts for a range of constitutive factors and their interaction in expressive composing; and
5. comparison of the resulting concept with selected discourse theories in order to place the new definition in its context and to generate questions for further research.

Thus, the procedures of this inquiry apply and illustrate the concept of theory-generation as an ongoing process. Throughout the research, each new discovery was compared with data from a different source or phase of the process. Providing a center for the entire process was the emerging definition, a nucleus that both collected and radiated energy in the form

of concepts and perceptions about the composing process. The research method combined analysis and introspection, placing existing theories beside each other to discover the dissonances as well as the resonances among them. This process has developed the model of written composing and the definition of expressive composing presented here.

A Constructivist Context for Expressive Composing

A composing theory that incorporates expressive writing and accounts for it accurately and consistently must itself have a consistent philosophical foundation. Discourse models often neglect expressive writing because of their rhetorical perspective, their emphasis on communication. Rhetoric tells us how we share meaning, but it does not tell us how we mean. In such a framework expressive writing--writing that focuses on the writer's own perceptions--can have only a limited place. A constructivist discourse theory includes rhetoric, but it concentrates more on meaning generation than on communication. A constructivist model views composing as an activity that makes meaning, and it defines meaning as a structuring activity. This perspective does not exclude communicative functions of composing but moves them to the side, out of the spotlight. The activity of mind itself becomes the center of attention, and the patterns of that activity make up the structure of the composing process. Unlike the rhetorical paradigm, a constructivist perspective makes distinctions between subject and object irrelevant. Its concern is not with the world as object but with our individual perceptions of the world.

The definition of expressive composing presented here represents a range of meaning-construction schemata within a broader range of such schemata

that constitutes a model of written composing. The following assertions characterize this model:

1. Written composing is centrally a meaning-construction process.
2. It is a dynamic, personal process in which structures of meaning are located in the writer, not in the sensory world.
3. Meaning inherently includes feeling.
4. Expressive functions are inherent in the composing process.
5. The composing model is a process model rather than a developmental or text-classification model.

This model of composing is based on a biological process theory of mind (Langer, 1967, 1972) and a constructivist theory of knowing (Kelly, 1963; Neisser, 1976, 1982; von Glasersfeld, 1981; and others). The importance of a biological process model is that it centers on human beings as organisms. Life is viewed as process, and every organic act has its origin in other acts. Furthermore, such a view requires that feeling--typically removed from cognitive theories under the label affect or emotion--is inseparable from knowing. A third important concept is that consciousness is a flexible, frequently changing dimension of mental activity. This concept allows us to see the role of consciousness in composing more clearly, to make finer distinctions than simply to say that writing is or is not a conscious behavior.

Constructivism tells us that human beings exist by acting, by constantly interpreting sensory information in terms of previously interpreted, and therefore anticipatory, structures of meaning (Langer, 1967, 1972; Neisser, 1976). Delia (1977) asserts that "meanings are rooted in

individual responses" (p. 75) to events, not in the events themselves. Interpretation is a process of comparing immediate sensory information to expectations, with the result that, in Piagetian terms (1977), we assimilate, or fit in, the new data, and accommodate, or adjust the anticipatory structures to account for new information.

The act of composing begins in the writer. An external event, which Langer (1967) calls an impact, may act as stimulus; but as soon as the individual notices it (assigns it a symbolizing image), it becomes a part of the meaning construction process. Thus, as Vygotsky (1962) has expressed it, the word is "an act of thought" (p. 5), not merely a tool for communication. In composing, an assignment or other occasion for writing is internalized, altered by the way it fits the writer's structures for understanding and interpreting it.

Constructivism, then, lets us see what written composing shares with other activities of mind, such as thinking and remembering. It provides a coherent framework within which we may place the writer's meaning-generating activity without ignoring the communicative dimensions of that activity. Because we assume that feeling is inherent in cognition, we set the stage for a composing model that accounts for expressive writing clearly and consistently. The following discussion will elaborate that model.

A Model of the Composing Process

Writing is an optional expression of composing. It is a special case because the thinking process subsumes the motor activity of writing, and the artifact of that subordinate process then parallels and influences the prior process. As the activity of thinking expands, it "collects" the act of writing, which becomes its expression. At the same time, the act of

thinking is altered by the process of writing. Sometimes, too, the intention to write initiates the process of thinking. Thus, thinking may be shaped by the option for expression.

The interaction of thinking and writing invites us to introduce the notion that written composing is a dialectic process. Various schemata, activated by each other or by sensory impact, combine through integration and subordination. Neisser (1976) defines schemata as an "array of physiological structures and processes" (p. 54), a system, not a brain center. They are best understood as potentialities, perhaps as neural paths that have been forged and are, therefore, likely to be used again. Thus, a schema is an anticipatory structure constructed from past perceptions.

For the most part, these schemata are changed because schemata are the mental forms of the familiar, the known. The meaning construction process is one of making the unknown familiar. Thus, the writer who has written countless short stories begins a new one with a strong, tacit sense of how it will happen. This is an anticipatory schema of the meaning structure to be created. It may also include an image of text to be produced.

A meaning structure is not a text. Essentially, meaning structure is the expression, or climactic phase, of the meaning construction process. It is a schema, not an object. A completed, written text, conversely, is a sensory object produced in the process of written composing. The process of writing is, to a great extent, one of seeking resonance between meaning structure and written text. Reading initiates a new interpretative process (Rosenblatt, 1978). When a text operates as part of the composing process, it functions as a sensory impact that alters and influences the activity of composing.

As the writer works, the process incorporates various kinds of tension between the familiar and unknown. Some of these are psychically intense and command the writer's attention: e.g., a plot detail that defies resolution. Others may be almost automatic: e.g., choosing a name for a minor character. Gradually, the writing proceeds, by dissonances between anticipations and expressions, between sense and imagination, toward a hierarchical structure in which all aspects of the new schema fit together: The short story has a smoothly developed plot that enables the writer to reveal a quirk of human nature, a pattern the writer has never expressed, has perhaps never understood before. So, too, the tendency toward a hierarchical integration of schemata to create meaning is a dialectic process.

The Initiating Incident

A central concern of rhetorical theories is the topic: finding a topic, identifying its parameters, articulating its associated details. Heuristics for invention are based on the problem of topic finding and topic elaboration. A conceptual problem that arises from this emphasis is the notion of an object, the topic, which is located outside the writer and which the writer must find and use. Preoccupation with communication over meaning construction has led to the domination, especially in school writing, of invention heuristics in writing instruction. This same emphasis has made the behaviorist model--of writing as a response to a stimulus--seem logical and efficient.

A constructivist model, on the other hand, asserts that the writer begins with the intent to construct a meaningful interpretation of experience. The event that initiates the writing process is commonly sensory. Yet, in terms of both time and process, the initiating event may be far removed from the writing.

In constructivist terms, an external event--such as a teacher's announcing a writing assignment--first acquires meaning as a sensory experience and, through perceptual activity, becomes an impetus for written composing. The composing process (cognition) interprets the sensory event. For example, a teacher says, "Write an essay on Huckleberry Finn's moral dilemma. Turn it in Friday in ink." Student A immediately wants to know how many paragraphs. Student B associates "moral dilemma" with the teacher's definition of the expression and begins reviewing her notes. Student C associates "moral dilemma" with an incident of cheating he witnessed the same morning.

Thus, by the time the sensory event becomes a "topic" for writing, it is many topics. The initial event, which Langer (1967) calls an impact, has been absorbed into the meaning construction processes of individuals. An event has meaning only in terms of an individual's perception of it. Composing is first an expressive act: The initiating event becomes part of a configuration of meanings that is unique to the individual writer. This configuration is constantly altered by new experiences, so that over time the meaning of the event changes.

We may say, then, that the composing process is initiated by some usually sensory event impinging on the continuous constructive activity of the mind. This event may be called a stimulus, but what happens next is clearly too complicated to be called a response in behaviorist terms. It is, instead, a constructive activity that occurs as a dialectic between the individual's sensory and imaginative experiences.

Dialectic I: Sense and Imagination

The relationship between sensory and imaginative activity is central to the composing process because composing is interpreting experience and

because writers produce texts. The locus of composing is, to adopt Langer's (1967) term, the ambient, which is itself a process of interaction. The ambient consists of all the potential acts and all the ongoing cognitive activity of an individual, constantly influenced by sensory perception in a dialectic with imaginative structuring; that is, with potentially re-usable images and symbols constructed from past experiences.

For the writer the ambient is the matrix of activity--sensory and imaginative--that produces meaning. Consistent with Langer's concept, the writer's ambient changes constantly because it always includes an emerging written text. The recorded language, along with the new mental constructs, becomes an element in the ongoing activity of composing. Moffett(1985) supports this view when he states that "a composition structures the mind while the mind is structuring it" (p. 308).

The ambient functions in the following way: Information from the external world is perceived by the individual and is immediately transformed into an image (Langer, 1967) through a process of anticipation, comparison, and revision of schemata (Kelly, 1963; Neisser, 1976). That is, the sensory event becomes a part of the activity of mind, instantly interpreted and incorporated into the ongoing process.

This continuous flow of images, symbols, and feelings is sometimes directed consciously and sometimes moves with apparent randomness. Since all activity is process, however, and since process has structure, nothing is actually random, although writers may often experience ideas and images as unconnected. In the composing process this alternation between purposive and seemingly random thinking occurs as an activity that seems to come from the meanings associated with various remembered images and feelings.

At the same time, however, other factors also affect the process; for example, a developing image of text, an imaginative conceptualization of reader, or a growing attitude toward the emerging text. All of these occur in the ambient, where, as writers read what they have written, their perceptions of the emerging text and of its possible readers and effects interact with the ongoing process of meaning construction. During the process, then, writers move back and forth between sensory and imaginative perceptions. The result may be subtle or obvious alterations of the anticipatory structures that guide the writing process.

Dialectic II: Anticipation and Expression

To assert that composing involves a dialectic relationship between anticipation and expression is simply to say that as the process of writing occurs, the words and images one produces influences the schema for continuing. Written composing begins as an activation of anticipatory structures (Neisser, 1976). This initial anticipation of meaning structure to be constructed may be formal and elaborate. A student, for instance, sees her assignment as a five-paragraph essay restating the teacher's definition of Huckleberry Finn's moral dilemma. On the other hand, it may be informal and only partially elaborated, as when a writer decides to record a remembered experience in her journal.

In other words, a writer may begin with an image of the meaning structure she wishes to create. Once the composing process begins, other schemata are integrated into it, altering and sometimes even replacing the original schema. Some of these schemata may be remembered experiences, perceptions of potential readers, and formal or linguistic schemata. For example, a student writing about racism in Huckleberry Finn recalls an undertone of racism in her

class's discussion of the novel. Although she continues to compose an essay on the original topic, her schema for meaning structure is now altered by a new insight.

An anticipatory image is not the same as a purpose for writing. Purpose is the effect a writer wishes to produce with a written text. A purpose for writing may clearly enter into the anticipatory image, but the image itself is a schema, an anticipation of outcome that guides the constructive process. Since it is a schema, the writer may or may not be aware of it. The word image should not be interpreted as a well-defined mental picture, but in the sense that Neisser (1976) uses the term, as that which is potentially perceivable, not actual (p. 132). In Neisser's sense, the term anticipatory image is redundant, but its use helps us to remember that meaning construction is guided by schemata, or anticipations.

In the case of assigned school writing, a detailed, complex anticipatory image is imposed on the process. It is instigated by an immediate sensory event (the assignment), and it is likely to be a strong, often conscious guide to the composing process. Yet it is made up of a number of other schemata--form, remembered information about the topic, a perception of the teacher as reader; and it is subject to the changes that make up the meaning-construction process. Self-initiated writing, such as a journal entry, may involve a less elaborate schema--remembered feelings or pictures that become more formal and complex as they draw into themselves other, related schemata. Both kinds, however, are influenced and altered by the process of composing.

Dialectic III: Conscious and Unconscious Activity

We must first acknowledge that this is a false dialectic. If we accept Langer's (1967) characterization of consciousness as a flexible and variable

level of intensity, a "psychical phase," we must logically describe this dimension of composing as much more than an "either-or" condition. Consciousness is "a qualitative aspect" of mental activity (p. 438). For writers it is essentially a felt tension that causes them to notice a phrase, a feeling, an image, or another aspect of the ambient. It may be induced by language on the page, by a passing car, by a ticking clock, or by a feeling of elation; and it is constantly changing in direction and intensity as the activity itself proceeds. Thus, we may speak of writing as discovery: an activity by which meanings are constructed and become conscious either as novelty, that is for the first time, or as recognition, a consciousness that what has been expressed is familiar rather then new. In either case, there is little to distinguish written composing, thus defined, from learning.

In this process a writer's attention may fluctuate among the emerging meaning, the perception of external pressures (assignment, deadline, audience, etc.), various imaginative structures, and his or her own intentions. Thus, writers may discover or recognize meanings at various points in the composing process. Their awareness of the ways in which these discoveries and recognitions influence the process will vary.

Neisser's (1976) discussion of selective attention is helpful here because he points out that we do not filter out sensory data; rather, we use what we need as we construct our perceptions (based on anticipatory schemata). He presents convincing evidence that we can continue to "absorb" one kind of data while attending to another. For writers, this suggests that, for example, a feeling may be influencing the process without our attending to it until it becomes more intense than anything else. Further, conscious attention may involve integrating one schema into another. That is, an

audience schema, once it becomes focal, may be altered by the writing, or we may discover when we pay attention to audience that we have already been altering that schema as we wrote.

At a given moment the writer may be focusing on an image and may not be aware of the feelings attached to the image, so that the language generated and written with the intention of describing the image carries, also, the feelings of the writer. Reading the words (which, as they are written, become part of the ambient), the writer may become conscious of the feelings. On the other hand, feelings may guide the writing but may result in symbolization in language of an image. That language may convey none of the feelings to which the writer has been consciously attending, but more likely will convey the feelings through the image.

Dialectic IV: Superordinate and Subordinate Schemata

Composing, then, is guided by an anticipatory schema, an image of meaning structure to be constructed, which is altered by other schemata activated by the process itself. We may now identify the guiding schema as superordinate and those that influence and change it as subordinate. This, too, is a conditional statement. Like subsidiary and focal attention, the hierarchical relationship among schemata is likely to change. As the process occurs, however, schemata organize themselves into an increasingly hierarchical integration. If the superordinate schema is unclear at the beginning of the process, it tends to become more highly organized, incorporating the related subordinate schemata. If it begins as a clear, well-organized schema, it still must be altered by the composing process. That is, what writers think they will make is never exactly what they end up making.

In fact, change is often a function of the emerging text itself. As writers read what they have written, the dissonance between the superordinate schema and the words on paper will cause alterations in both schema and text. The process moves toward a resonance between text and meaning structure. The meaning structure actually created is the expression of the constructive activity guided by a dynamic hierarchy of anticipatory schemata.

The Great Dialectic: Writing as an Expressive and Rhetorical Act

We compose as a means of understanding our experience, and the construction materials that we use are previous interpretations, colored and shaped by their interaction with our perceptions of the sensory world. Included, but not always dominant, in that sensory world are other people; and to the extent that our perceptions of them--as readers and responders--operate in the composing process, composing is rhetorical. Insofar as a perception of reader response participates in the pattern of meaning construction, even writing a poem is a rhetorical act.

Conversely, many of the schemata at work in the composing process function non-rhetorically. They are memories and associations in terms of which a new meaning structure takes shape. As we have said, they are personal and often idiosyncratic. One writer sees the mind as a computer; another sees it as a river; and, regardless of their rhetorical intentions, both writers develop different meanings because of these different images.

Much of the time, a sense of reader, a schema, is integrated in the anticipatory structure. It may be subordinate and largely unconscious, or it may dominate the process. The tension between constructing meaning and creating effect is naturally present in most written composing.

In describing the composing process, as opposed to categorizing a written text, we would say that the expressive-rhetorical, or meaning-effect, dialectic results in a new structure of meaning influenced and shaped by both kinds of anticipation. One kind or the other is likely to become dominant, to guide the superordinate anticipatory image. The resulting meaning structure, however, is shaped by all participating schemata. The extent to which it is reflective of one anticipatory image or another is determined in and through the dynamics of the composing process.

A Constructivist Concept of Expressive Composing

We may begin to seek an understanding of the activity of expressive composing by exploring the theoretical literature. Here (Britton, 1982; Britton et al., 1975; Kinneavy, 1971) we discover the following verbs used to describe expressive writing: think, explore, maintain, reveal, imply, emerge, develop, achieve, awaken, make, discover, play, reconstruct. These verbs tend to echo the preceding discussion of composing as a meaning construction process. To the extent that a writing activity is guided by exploration, discovery, experimentation, and reflection, we may say that expressive functions predominate. Yet, no single influence operates exclusively in composing, so we must look for signs that the writer's focal object (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) consists of the feelings, associations, and values that form the meaning construction process.

Expressive composing always leads toward the self, drawing the world into the writer more than it draws the writer into the world. Polanyi has stated that if we attend to an outer world (focal) event, we cannot at the same time focus our attention on feelings about that event. Feelings, specific sensory and imaginative responses, are subsidiaries and form the

matrix in which the event acquires its meaning. We cannot attend to subsidiaries, yet we shape the meaning of the focal event in terms of that matrix. By applying Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge to the composing act, we may find a way into an understanding of expressive functions.

When the process of meaning construction--the memories, feelings, and sensations associated with an event--becomes the focal object, and the event itself becomes subsidiary, the writing process becomes expressive. The writer's focal attention centers on the ambient, and external-world subjects, as well as pressures of audience, become subsidiary to the intention to express the complex of inner experiencing.

Expressive writing, then, in Neisser's terms (1976), is writing about the act of perception, which I have chosen to call <u>experiencing</u>. If we understand that experiencing always includes values and feelings, then it becones comfortable and consistent to say that expressive composing takes experiencing as its focal object.

A difficulty in describing expressive functions occurs, first, because they seldom exist in isolation and, second, because any composing activity involves shifts between focal and subsidiary attention. We can seek to isolate an expressive function only as one dimension, if sometimes the dominant dimension, of the larger composing act. It is more important to demonstrate that the expressive function is inherent in the composing act, even when the writer is not writing expressively.

Shifts in writers' focal attention are guided by their intentions and perceptions. Writers may not be aware of shifting attention from an event to their own feelings about it because, as we have seen, consciousness is flexible. Polanyi and Prosch (1975) say that focal attention is always

conscious, but subsidiary attention may occur at any level of consciousness (p. 39).

The integration of personal experience with external events and situations in most writing makes the expressive function difficult to pin down; but this same complexity provides support for the assertion that expressive functions are always part of the composing process. They are the part of composing that constructs meaning literally in terms of a writer's existing values and feelings. Thus, we can say that the subject of expressive writing is the writer's own experiencing.

Process and Text

The word writing bears the verb-noun ambiguity characteristic of gerunds. We say, on the one hand, that expressive writing is composing activity that explicitly reflects one's own meaning construction process as its focal object. Conversely, an expressive text is a piece of writing, an artifact of the process, that makes experiencing explicit through direct reference to the writer and to the writer's values and feelings. In both process and text, concerns about reader, form, and language tend to be subsidiary to concerns about interpreting the experience itself.

To make a distinction between expressive functions in the meaning construction process and an expressive text is critical to the following discussion. We have been referring to the expressive function as a meaning construction activity that focuses on itself. In order to make use of such a concept in a discourse model, however, we must distinguish written images or, at least, textual parallels to the activities of mind that produce the text.

Similarly, we understand that a written text contains clues to the constructive process but cannot reveal the process completely or accurately.

I have asserted that the composing process involves creating resonance between meaning structure, or superordinate schema, and text; between anticipated meaning and its written approximation. We may see in text an analogy to process rather than evidence of process. It is in this analogy, or resonance, between process and artifact that we can begin to create a bridge from composing to text. We must, however, acknowledge that the connection is limited and tentative.

The Writer-Reader Dimension

From a constructivist perspective, the appropriate question to ask with reference to the writer-reader dimension of expressive composing is not "Who is the intended audience for the text?" but rather "How does a writer's perception of a reader influence the meaning-construction process?" There is a rhetorical overtone in speaking of "intended audience" that is largely removed by focusing on "perceived reader" because the latter term accounts more clearly for the sometimes minor or even subconscious (Kantor, 1978) place of reader consideration in expressive composing and because it makes conceptualizing the reader only one of a complex of schemata that participate in the activity of written composing.

In expressive composing, two limitations are placed on the writer's perceptions of readers: First, they are confined to a narrow range; and second, schemata for readerstend to remain subordinate throughout the composing process. The composing literature suggests that we perceive a range of readers for expressive writing, including the following: no reader; the self only; a familiar, trusted reader; a reader who shares the writer's values or experiences; and an extended, public readership in the role of close friends.

The first of these perceptions, that of no reader, comes from Young and Becker (1967), who assert that expressive writing is non-communicative (p. 106). In terms of a constructivist model, a completely non-communicative piece of writing would be unread, even by the writer, and would therefore have no meaning. In spite of some evidence to the contrary (Blau, 1983), writers do read what they write (Britton et al., 1975; Elbow, 1985; Shanklin, 1981), so that the words on paper enter into the constructive process as sensory data (Shanklin, 1981). Further, although a writer may remember unrecorded verbal structures, the generation of any symbolic structure requires some kind of conscious attention, which Langer (1972) refers to as <u>ideation</u> (p. 314). We may assert, then, that at its simplest, reader schema may consist of a writer's reading as a part of the constructive process. This is not a strictly expressive function but is part of the composing process itself. Emig (1983) and Flower (1979) both speak of writing for the self, although neither refers explicitly to expressive writing. Flower sees the absence of perceived external readers as a problem or weakness in the writing process. Emig uses the description in defining reflexive writing.

The greatest consensus in the composing literature centers on the category of trusted, familiar reader. The Britton group (1975) describe the relationship as "relaxed and intimate" (p. 82), and characterize the intended reader as familiar with both writer (1975) and situation (Britton, 1982). Britton (1982) considers the expressive to be personal communication, a "coming together" (p. 97) of writer and reader through the writing. Martin (1983) and Emig (1983) refer to trust, and Martin also asserts that the intended reader must be interested in the writer. The difference between an intended reader characterized in these ways and the self as intended

reader seems to be a difference in degree: How much conscious attention does the writer pay to perceived reader, and how much does the writer adapt the meaning structure for perceived reader?

At the outer limit of an expressive range of perceived readers, however, this relationship may be somewhat different. Britton et al (1975) refer to both a limited public audience with shared context and values, and an extended public audience given the role of friends. Because this perception of reader draws our attention to expressiveness in published texts, it suggests that at some point in the composing process, the writer may consciously acknowledge or select a reader schema in the expressive range. When an essayist, such as Thomas (1984), or a diarist, such as Dillard (1974), writes, the process includes a sense of this limitation, which we may describe as trust and familiarity or as simply choosing to address those whose values one shares.

By identifying this narrow range of readers, we support our earlier assertion that expressive writing is guided by other schemata, specifically by attention to the meaning construction process itself. Reader schemata remain largely subsidiary, although not necessarily always unconscious. A writer who assumes a reader's familiarity and good will is likely to feel free to concentrate on other dimensions of the meaning construction process. Similarly, a writer who is primarily interested in understanding and interpreting an experience may not be interested in readers at all. It may also be true that a major difference between the expressive and the rhetorical involves the obligation in the latter to construct writer-reader relationships, which already exist or are assumed to exist in expressive composing.

Reader schemata are a part of the expressive process to the extent that the writing is perceived to have a reader, even a single reader, or to have other functions in terms of clarifying or characterizing the writer's experiences. For example, in a memory-based narrative, a writer may be exploring or characterizing an experience in the past. If the writer became aware of a difference between his or her past and present self, or if he or she decided to consider a potential external reader, the meaning structure would be altered by each of these shemata. In this situation, as in any where the writer's focus is on personal experience or feelings, the need to alter meaning for a perceived external reader may diminish the expressiveness of the process if that reader is perceived as, for example, a stranger; or it may enhance the expressiveness of the composing if the reader is friend, confidant, or sharer of past experience.

In summary, some combination of subsidiary and empathetic constructions of readers allows the writer to concentrate on the feelings, images, and symbols that constitute the meaning construction process. The writer's feelings of familiarity with readers make a verbal construction of elaborate contexts unnecessary. Only when concerns about readers fall outside this expressive range does the writing process become more rhetorical and less expressive.

Expressiveness and Form

The tendency to identify expressive forms occurs in rhetorics based on categorizations of text (e.g. Kinneavy, 1971); in literary contexts (e.g. Wheelwright, 1954), where the term expressive is often interchangeable with poetic or literary; and in a discourse model like Britton's (1975), where expressive writing is distinguished from poetic or transactional writing as

function categories of conventional language use. These classifications are text-centered, and the forms are actually text categories, more properly referred to as genres. A careful distinction between form and genre will show that there are no expressive genres, or rather that no genre is exclusively expressive, and that, consequently, expressive writing may occur in any genre.

Form, on the other hand, may be seen as a kind of schema that participates in the composing act, what Neisser (1976) would term a "cognitive map" (p. 111) because it is concerned with anticipations of pattern. Form is a dimension of meaning, not a separate entity--not, in fact, a mold into which meaning is poured (Murray, 1980). Forms are involved in the dialectic of meaning construction; they influence and are influenced by the composing process. When a writer begins with an experience to be interpreted, an image, a metaphor, or a phrase may suggest a pattern of organization. The composing process gradually incorporates a schema for arrangement--perhaps for rhythm, paragraphing, or line length; and that schema influences the developing meaning structure. By form, then, we mean patterns of organization; and certain of these patterns may be characterized as expressive when they occur in conjunction with other expressive dimensions of process.

The term literary, like poetic and aesthetic, exists in a cultural or social dimension, while expressive is a psycho-linguistic term. The answer to the question "Is it literary?" is completely independent from the answer to the question "Is it expressive?" Since meaning and form are largely inseparable (Langer, 1957), the construction of a text that is subsequently called a story or sonnet reflects the same processes of composing as that which produces a letter or an essay. Our interest here lies in how each is produced rather than in how it may later be judged or labeled.

A difficulty in distinguishing between expressive and literary writing occurs for the same reason that a difficulty occurs in distinguishing persuasive from expressive or immature from expressive writing. That is, readers identify expressive features in many kinds of texts because what we label as expressive are often simply indications in a text of the meaning construction process itself. The "presence" of the writer, the focus on the writer's experiences or values, the incomplete or implicit context--all of these may be considered expressive features.

Another artificial tension between literary and expressive writing occurs when literary texts are seen as verbal objects (Britton et al., 1975) in order to assert a distance between writer and subject. If we see, however, that the source of all writing is a complex interweaving of memory, feeling, and immediate perceptions of experience, then the text that results is not "free" from the writer. It is an artifact of the writer's unique constructive activity.

For a more productive investigation of expressive patterns, we need to return to descriptors such as "loosely structured" (Britton et al., 1975), and to assertions that expressive writing follows associative and narrative patterns. It is this kind of description that ties together the personal writing of a school child at an early developmental stage with that of some of our most sophisticated writers.

Associative Patterns

When Flower (1979) describes writer-based prose as associative, she means that it follows the structure of the writer's thoughts. Britton (1982), too, identifies this pattern as expressive and says that expressive writing is relaxed and loosely structured. Yet, what is seen as looseness or lack of structure may actually be a pattern of development that changes shape or

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direction for non-linear or non-logical reasons. Such an associative pattern, a kind of "and that reminds me of this," which may be implicit or explicit, can be perceived in some texts as childish and in others as intuitive and poetic.

An example of the latter is Frost's (1962) "Birches." The poem begins with a connection between a perceived image and a memory: "When I see birches bend to left and right/ . . ./I like to think some boy's been swinging them" (p. 178). The first section of the poem consists of a series of images, but the next section develops a personal memory, shifting to past-tense verbs and ending, "So was I once myself a swinger of birches" (p. 179). The final section of the poem presents reflections imbedded in metaphor, which then moves to symbol: "I'd like to get away from earth a while/And then come back to it and begin over."

One would not call this poem loosely structured, but its pattern of development is neither analytical nor deductive. The associative pattern suggests the web metaphor borrowed by Ehrig (1983) and others from Vygotsky (1962), a pattern in which words, feelings, and images are drawn into each other in dynamics unique to the individual writer's constructive schemata. What makes this pattern expressive is that the writer records the movement of thought explicitly rather than subordinating it to more rhetorical discourse patterns.

An associative pattern may become quite elaborate. Schön (1979) speaks of generative metaphors, those by which we create perspectives of the world (p. 254). The metaphor of mind as river (Dillard, 1982) organizes and limits one's interpretation of the mind's activity. This is an expressive pattern in that it both guides the composing process and is explicit in the text. This use of metaphor as a generative function is opposed,

as Ortony (1979) points out, to the Aristotelian concept of metaphor as a rhetorical embellishment of text. A generative metaphor guides the formal pattern of meaning construction.

Patterns of Repetition

When Frye (1963) speaks of associative language, he refers not only to "the daydreaming, remembering, worrying, associating, brooding and mooning" (p. 20) by which, he says, people put inner speech into words. He is primarily referring to the phrasal rhythms of everyday speech, a non-syntactic rhythm created by units that consist of a short phrase organized around a central word. It is "more repetitive than prose, as it is the process of working out an idea, and repetitions are largely rhythmic filler (p. 21).

Frye's characterization of associative rhythms leads to another pattern that has been identified with the expressive, that of repetition. Meanings may emerge through emphasis as well as through elaboration. Kinneavy (1971) refers to religious credoes and litanies as expressive (p. 434). He also states that expressive discourse is characterized by phrasal rhythms from speech (p. 436). In the following passage, a high school senior writes about the pressures she feels:

> Go! Back to school, meeting, sell, make plans, make posters, home. Housework, homework, I've got to get a scholarship. Work, work, work. Answer phone. . . .Think, write, create.
>
> No time, no time, the typewriter chants. No time, no time, my furniture wavers to the beat. I've got to write this essay for the application, and it has to be good.
>
> No time for reflection, I think, and summon up the strength to haul my body up to the typewriter. "Get off the phone and take your bath." But I could have sworn I was still in my room at the typewriter. Essay, essay, I've got to write this essay. No, I can't cry now. There's no time ("Rhonda," 1984).

The phrase "no time" gradually emerges as the organizing pattern of the

passage. Also, a rhythmic pattern is established through "Housework, homework, I've got to get a scholarship" and "Essay, essay, I've got to write this essay," and is echoed more softly in the second paragraph. The writer's feelings of frustration emerge through a combination of expressive patterns and language functions.

Thus, repeated words and phrases, as well as rhythms, become a dimension of meaning because of their repetition. Repeated sounds and rhythmic patterns in poetry may be a special case of this formal aspect of expressive composing.

Narrative Patterns

Narrative structure is often considered (Britton et al., 1975; Flower, 1979) to be typical of expressive writing. It is frequently found in texts identified as expressive. Narrative is, after all, a recounting of events in time, usually from the point of view of an actor in the events. When that actor is the writer, we are likely to see the narrative as expressive. If, however, expressive writing is a meaning construction activity, the writer is not simply recounting an experience but is interpreting it, giving it shape and meaning. The narrative, then, acts as a frame for reflection.

In the following excerpt, a woman (Martin, 1952/1975), stranded alone in Alaska, records an experience in a journal.

> I killed a sea otter today. I actually did kill a sea otter. . . .
>
> Without thinking, I swung the ax at the side of its head, felt the jar in my arm, heard the thud. As I swung the ax, I turned and tried to run. I was so terrified the thing would nab me from behind that I could hardly move. . . .
>
> It is very much against the law to kill a sea otter. Right now I don't care a rap for law. I'd like to have a picture of a game warden who could arrest me now (pp. 302-303).

In this passage, the narrative is interspersed with explicit value statements

("I don't care a rap . . .") and related reflections ("It is very much against the law . . ."), but the meaning structure is organized by narrative.

Moffett (1985) depicts such a process in describing composing a memoir:

> I must recall details more clearly than I would usually for myself alone . . . , shape a salience, formulate the experience in language that I have not previously cast the memory in, . . . A memoir often induces new understandings of a memory (p. 307).

Frost's poem "Birches," by contrast, contains a narrative passage but is not a narrative poem. Narrative, then, is not an expressive genre, but narrative is one of the more common patterns of expressive composing.

Expressiveness in Language

Just as one hesitates to label any group of words poetic or technical, so one cannot safely say that any word, in itself, is expressive. Furthermore, in examining expressive language, the dividing line between process and text becomes even harder to maintain, especially since most discussions of the semantics of expressiveness refer to texts. The two theorists whose discussions of expressive language are most elaborate, Kinneavy (1971) and Wheelwright (1954), present text-centered concepts.

We also see in most discussions of expressive language the dichotomy between emotion and reason. Historically, expressive has often been synonymous with creative or imaginative, and these terms have been associated with the emotive or non-rational functions of language (Sapir, 1949), implying a dichotomy that the constructivist framework calls into question. The idea of private or subjective meanings (Britton, 1982; Kinneavy, 1971), for instance, suggests that words can also have stable, objective meanings. Both Wheelwright and Kinneavy describe expressive language as connotative, implying by that description that non-expressive language is denotative.

Flower (1979) mentions that in writer-based prose, meanings shift; and Wheelwright refers to multiple meanings in expressive discourse. All of these descriptions of expressive language imply their opposites: stable and objective meanings unaffected by individual values or experience.

Conceptions of expressive language are of two general and largely contrasting types: those that see expressive language as primitive, speech-like, and informal (Britton et al., 1975; Flower, 1979), developmentally related to inner speech; and those that characterize it in formal, elaborate terms (Kinneavy, 1971; Wheelwright, 1954). Yet, in spite of these differences, most descriptions of expressive language fall into three categories that cut across theoretical distinctions. These categories may be labeled egocentrism ambiguity, and figurativeness. Before examining these categories, let us review the constructivist perspective in which they will be placed.

A description of expressive language must be consistent with already established descriptions of expressive functions and of the expressive range of reader schemata. That is, we are bound to examine expressive functions of language within the constructive process of composing. This means that what is expressive in language must point to the meanings of events rather than to the events themselves. Words, images, and feelings all generate meanings; and the language of expressive writing articulates that process. Expressiveness is not in symbols, however, but in the use of symbols by a writer. There is no expressive lexicon, but there are language functions that tend to operate when one is writing expressively; and thoses functions produce features that make a text seem expressive. Finally, our understanding of expressive language must be consistent with the narrow range of perceived readers and the generally subordinate role of reader schemata that characterize expressive composing.

Egocentrism: Although in some contexts egocentrism refers only to a Piagetian concept of early development, the concept of inward or self-directed focus pervades definitions of expressive writing. This inward focus lends authority to Kinneavy's (1971) assertion that expressive language contains "I" attitudes and first-person pronouns (p. 435). The subordination of events to their meaning for the writer suggests that values, too, would be made explicit.

This same characteristic of expressive composing accounts for Britton's (1982) assertion that expressive language is situation-dependent and for Flower's reference to its implicitness. The external events that instigate composing may be understood to be familiar to the perceived reader. Kinneavy's (1971) reference to idiolect may be interpreted in the light of this narrow reader range. The use of private meanings is more likely to occur where communication is limited to those who share the meaning. Thus, what is classified as subjectivity or egocentrism in those theories can be explained, in a constructivist theory, as a function of the writer's focal attention to the meaning construction process and the limited range of perceived reader in expressive composing.

Ambiguity: One must distinguish two kinds of ambiguity. The first is textual: that is, a reader perceives more than one meaning for a symbol and, given the context, may judge this multiple meaning to be a strength or a weakness of the text. The second is process ambiguity, where a writer uses a word without clearly delimiting its meaning. That is, words generate meanings. Sometimes a word is used without the writer's being conscious of all of its values.

If we remember that meaning construction is a dynamic process, we may assert that values attached to individual symbols change in the activity of composing. Thus, we have what Wheelwright (1954) calls plurisignation: words that carry more than one meaning at a time. These multiple meanings, he says, can have a cumulative effect, so that the whole exceeds the sum of its parts (p. 67). In some writing, as Flower (1979) points out, this may be seen as inconsistency of meaning in a text. On the other hand, a word may accrue meanings so that readers perceive it as a multi-dimensional symbol. Missing contexts and general terms (Kinneavy, 1971) may also be seen as functions of the expressive focus and of the subordination of limited range of reader schemata.

Figurativeness: When a writer's focal attention is directed toward the meaning construction process, it is to be expected that the images and associations that give an experience meaning will be articulated. Figurative language emerges naturally from the tendency to make imaginative associations explicit. Because metaphor provides a direct, concrete image for an abstraction (Langer, 1957), it makes sense to discover metaphor in expressive writing, which often seeks to construct an interpretation of abstract values and feelings.

A related kind of language, described by Langer (1957) and Wheelwright (1954), is the iconic. Meaning is, in some sense, in the symbol itself rather than in the referend. In terms of expressive discourse, the concept of iconic language accounts for a connection between Kinneavy's description of private or idiosyncratic meanings and Britton's (1975) statement that expressive discourse requires a shared background between writer and reader.

Childhood ritual chants ("Cross my heart and hope to die"), as well as expletives, gain their power through exact repetition. They are formulaic, like the litanies that Kinneavy describes as expressive. They also tend to be highly personal and value-laden.

Iconic language is not exclusively expressive. The use of catch phrases and ritual chants to invoke and influence human emotions is as old as politics. Yet most persuasive uses of iconic language require that the ritual meaning be publicly shared. Private or closely held iconic language may be said to characterize some expressive discourse. This, then, may be one type of idiolect or neolanguage (Kinneavy, 1971) identified as expressive.

Summary

A constructivist model characterizes composing as centrally a meaning-construction activity, a hierarchical structuring of anticipatory schemata to create a meaning structure that is reflected in or approximated by a written text. The text functions in the composing process as sensory data, part of the perceptual cycle of interpretation. Thus, the process is one of seeking increasing resonance between anticipatory image and written text. In this way the relationship between written composing and meaning construction can be described.

The model also asserts that feeling is inherent in meaning and that meaning structures are located in the writer rather than in the sensory world. This perspective accounts for much of what is usually identified as expressive in composing. The conception of composing as a dialectic process means that we can explore the ways that different schemata act on each other and influence the meaning structure. It promotes a view of composing

as synthesis, as a progressively integrated schematic structure.

The effect of such a model is to create a flexible view of process, one in which expressive as well as rhetorical functions may be sometimes focal and sometimes subsidiary. Levels of conscious attention vary. Instead of mutually exclusive process categories (e.g. persuasive, poetic, expressive), we have an image of dialectic and hierarchical structuring in which the relationships among schemata lead to our characterizations of the process.

Expressive composing takes place when the writer attends focally to the meaning construction process and writes about the activity of interpreting, so that external events and sensory data tend to be subsidiary. In the dynamics of constructive activity, the anticipatory image is organized by the feelings, memories, and images that constitute the meaning of the writer's experience.

The perceived reader is limited to the writer, a trusted and familiar other person, or a larger group of people who share the writer's values or who are perceived hypothetically as friends. Schemata for readers are and tend to remain subordinate. When schemata for readers become superordinate, they tend to draw the writer's attention away from personal patterns of meaning and cause the writer to attend more to sensory events, making the process more rhetorical and less expressive.

Certain pattern- and language-generating schemata are likely to be activated when expressive functions are superordinate. Schemata for formal patterns reflect the pattern of the writer's constructive activity; most characteristically, these patterns include association, repetition, and narrative. These are not expressive schemata but are schemata that may function expressively. Language schemata articulate the writer's attention

to the meanings of events rather than to the events themselves: Writers may, for instance, refer explicitly to feelings or attitudes; they may refer to themselves. Figurative and imagistic language is common, along with ambiguity and multiple meanings that indicate the associations involved in the constructive process.

To perceive this model as a range definition requires that we recall the hierarchical and dialectic nature of the composing process. Certain schemata, or anticipatory structures, in meaning construction activity identify that activity as expressive. They may create expressiveness of process by structure, by focal attention, or by superordination. A series of examples will illustrate how this range of dynamic relationships may be characterized as a definition of expressive composing.

1. Structure: Some kinds of perceived reader schemata contribute to expressiveness of process; others do not. Also, narrative patterns may be expressive when they are activated in combination with other expressive schemata; in other relationships, narrative patterns would not be considered expressive.

2. Focal attention: A composing process is most likely to be expressive when a writer's focal attention is on his or her own feelings, associations, and images rather than on an external event or rhetorical effect.

3. Superordination: In expressive composing, the anticipatory image that guides the process is characteristically organized by the writer's patterns of meaning construction. Schemata for reader, by contrast, are subordinate.

Implications

Expressiveness in Texts

This definition of expressive composing calls into question many text classification models because it invites us to look at correspondences

instead of differences among textual features. Readers categorize texts, to a great extent, by identifying contrastive features. Yet a personal essay can be highly persuasive. A poem can be intensely expressive. Even a diary entry can be structured for rhetorical effect.

Text classifications tend to break down because they force a reader to make artificial distinctions. Genre labels are necessary for literary analyses of some kinds, but text classifications in discourse theory are probably best approached in terms of identifying features and describing reader response. That is, it is too simplistic to say that an essay is either persuasive or expressive, and judgments about its aesthetic value occur in another dimension altogether. This study emphasizes the various ways that formal patterns, sensory events, language, memories, feelings and perceptions of writers can be organized and constructed into text. Composing is a synthesizing activity, and descriptions of texts can be more accurate if they reflect this synthesis.

Subordination of reader schema does not itself imply an inadequate composing process or lead to a rhetorically deficient text. Since subordination of reader schema is a meaning construction function and affects the emergent meaning structure, expressive composing may produce texts that appear to be rhetorically ineffective. For example, if a writer leaves out details of setting in a narrative, the text may be perceived as incomplete or ambiguous. In terms of process, writers include what fits their anticipatory images. On the other hand, these same constructive processes may result in texts that are perceived by readers as poetic or symbolically rich.

Directions for Research

One important goal of theory construction is to generate a theory with a high degree of explanatory power. Another is to provide a coherent and

useful framework for research and teaching. Theory construction generates insight, but it also generates problems. The view of composing described in this study suggests directions for research both outside the constructivist model and within unelaborated areas of the model.

1. Re-examine assumptions about composing research: Some familiar assertions from contemporary discourse theories are refuted by this model. For example, if composing is a meaning construction process, it cannot be characterized as objective. A writer cannot be distanced from the process of composing. Another example: Since consciousness is flexible, a writer can attend to more than one dimension of the constructive process at the same time. This conclusion enriches a model of composing because it allows us to describe the complexity of composing activity more elaborately and richly than simply to say it is conscious or unconscious.

It also implies that a writer's perceptions of his or her composing process become a dimension of that process. In expressive composing, those perceptions tend to be superordinate; but any time a writer's attention is drawn to the composing activity, the activity is altered by that attention (c.f. composing aloud).

2. Apply the model to other traditional categories of written composing: If this model of written composing accounts for expressive writing, it must also account for other composing functions, those that we might call non-expressive. This is clearly a test of the theory and an avenue for further investigation. This study implies that one kind of meaning construction process operates in all kinds of composing. Thus, for example, form schema for cause-and-effect argument, together with reader schema for an unfamiliar or unsympathetic reader, might draw into the process a collection of

subsidiary schemata that resulted in what we would call persuasive composing.

Our tendency to describe both text and process in the same terms and to characterize composing patterns as goal-directed leads to confusion about constructions of meaning. It may be that there is no such thing as persuasive composing, only persuasive text. Perhaps we should ascribe the power or tendency to persuade, not to the written composing process, but to the interpretative interactions of readers and texts. We have used the term rhetorical to mean, roughly, composing in which reader schema is or becomes superordinate. That is, we are actually contrasting expressive and rhetorical functions.

One way to explore the flexibility and power of this definition of expressive composing would be to generate some cases and analyze how they fit. Suppose that a writer has been describing his feelings as he walked down a deserted street on a rainy night. As he writes, he discovers a pattern, a rhythm, and begins to eliminate references to his feelings in favor of letting images and rhythms carry his meaning:

> I have been one acquainted with the night.
> I have walked out in rain--and back in rain.
> I have outwalked the furthest city light (Frost, 1963, p. 161).

Has the formal pattern become superordinate, and, if so, is the composing still expressive?

3. Explore our views on creativity and originality: This definition of expressive writing may lead us to look at originality or creativity in a different way. A key is explicit personalness. Expressive composing may involve personal references and value statements, but it may also integrate language structures that reflect an idiosyncratic rather than a general or public perception of phenomena. Wheelwright (1954) says that expressive

discourse is neither true nor false by empirical standards. What we accept as unarguable in expressive discourse may also be what we recognize as creative or original, the writer's own perception of experience.

> I cannot listen to Mahler's Ninth Symphony with anything like the old melancholy mixed with the high pleasure I used to take from this music (Thomas, 1984, p. 164).

What we recognize here is a writer's way of organizing experience. It is not Frost's rain or Thomas's symphony that stands out in these passages, but the writers' patterning of meaning. The more the text reflects these patterns, images, and feelings, the more it is expressive and, perhaps, the more we perceive it as original.

4. Reconsider the notion of audience: A constructivist theory points toward a rather more complex characterization of audience functions in composing than we find in most cognitive process models. It suggests that notions of audience are, in fact, schemata that operate at varying levels of consciousness and significance in the composing process. It may be that there is a significant conceptual difference between "intended audience" and "perception of reader." This issue, in turn, leads to speculation about the parallels between meaning construction processes of writers and meaning construction processes of readers.

5. Investigate the role of memory in composing: The concept of memory poses another interesting problem. To suppose that memory is a dynamic, constructive process, rather than a storage unit for pieces of information, is a beginning point for exploring ways that memory functions in written composing. No two memories are alike because no two people have shared exactly the same experiences throughout their lives. Our interpretations of past experiences change as those schemata encounter more recent events and interpretations (Neisser, 1982).

6. Integrate and compare process and developmental models: The model described in this study is not developmental. In order to see expressive composing as a group of functions that can occur at any level of writer competence and writing complexity, it was necessary to approach the study in this way. On the other hand, this model has yet to be integrated with a constructivist model of learning; and, consequently, it has yet to be tested against developmental models of written composing. A strength of the constructivist paradigm is that it allows the integration of thinking and learning. In a sense, thinking is learning, and both are composing. A developmental model flows into a process model, which continues in some ways to be developmental. The sorting out of this perspective can lead to questions for research as well as strategies for teaching.

7. Seek insights on composing outside the schools: Not surprisingly, when researchers turned away from classical rhetoric and its text models, they began to seek knowledge of composing through school writing. Such writing has been a rich source of information in many ways, but it is a circular activity. Research often describes school writing only in terms of itself, contrasting, for instance, the composing behaviors of skilled and unskilled student writers. Much more attention needs to be given to those who write for non-academic purposes.

Models for school writing continue to be much narrower in their variety than the kinds and functions of real-world writing. Imitations of traditional models, such as the argumentative essay or the expository report, are simply reproductions of an already limited, artificial range of composition patterns. Similarly, specifying a detailed rhetorical context for writing, as is typically done in schools, may actually forestall the composing process. The model presented in this study implies that the unresolved dialectic between

writers' images of meaning and schema for reader contributes to the meaning construction process. Many heuristic devices are directly related to specific rhetorical goals. The underlying implication is that composing instruction may not be teaching students how to construct meanings at all, but may be teaching them shortcuts that preclude or limit real meaning construction.

8. Focus on theoretical dissonances: This study has articulated dissonances in composition theory that are genuinely paradigmatic. Much of the theoretical literature, including that which focuses on composing processes, reflects a rationalist, static view of the universe. Its roots are in literary criticism and classical rhetoric. Serious attempts have been made to change the focus in recent years, including conscious attention to writer behaviors. Yet without a fully developed theoretical perspective, this observational research may have told us nearly all that it can. The terms and contexts that we use in composing remain much the same: audience, rhetorical situation, invention, persuasive, poetic. Of course, other terms have emerged that reflect changing perspectives: transaction, discovery, matrix. Yet the lexicon, and the image, of composing research seems to remain suspended between theoretical perspectives. We are unable to exclude text classification or the rhetorical triangle because they are tacit roots of our contemporary theoretical structure.

It may be that our research must continue to generate dissonances, that we should turn our attention to understanding the conflicts and why they exist. If the rhetorical paradigm is sound, it should be able to assimilate the model articulated in this study. Empirical and constructivist world views can co-exist, even if precariously. The point is to

examine the conflicts, to create a dialectic and see where it takes us. A dialogue about our philosophical conflicts can provide a means for us to interpret, evaluate, and apply each other's research more fruitfully.

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